

<b>Committee(s)</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Queen's Park Joint Consultative Group – For Discussion	9.11.2016
Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, Queen's Park Committee – For Decision	21.11.2016
<b>Subject:</b> Queen's Park – Superintendents Update - November 2016	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Richard Gentry – Open Spaces Department	

### Summary

This Report provides an update to Members of the Queen's Park Joint Consultative Group in regard to the on-going management and operational activities in Queen's Park since June 2016. The Report gives an update on operational matters including; operational working arrangements, income generation, sustainability, conservation, infrastructure and facilities including the Queen's Park Cafe.

### Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the content of the report.
- Delegate authority to the Superintendent to agree a 13-month catering lease with the existing proprietor of the Queen's Park café in consultation with the City Surveyor and the Comptroller & City Solicitor.
- Instruct the Comptroller and City Solicitor to complete the documentation for the café lease.
- Agree to undertake a public engagement and consultation exercise to inform an options appraisal to guide future decisions on the café lease.
- Give feedback on the proposal from a local resident to create a fenced area to permit dogs to be off lead.
- That the views of the Queen's Park Joint Consultative Group be conveyed to the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee at their meeting on the 21 November 2016.

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. A Team Leader has now been recruited at the Golders Hill Park Zoo. This will enable the Queen's Park Animal Keeper and Engagement Assistant, to work with the Team Leader to develop a Vision, Mission and Values statement for the Golders Hill Park Zoo and Queen's Park Farm. The recruitment of a new team leader at the Golders Hill Park Zoo has enabled the commencement of a process which will focus on the future animal collection in the Children's Farm. As a team they will be working cross division at both the zoo in Golders Hill and the farm in Queen's Park.
2. The donation box at the Queen's Park Farm is being reviewed. It is hoped that new donation boxes, that are more visually attractive, will encourage visitors to make regular donations to help support the costs of providing the children's farm.

### **Update on the Queen's Park Café**

3. It was reported at the June Committee Meeting that the Queen's Park café tender was awarded to a local company, Minkies (Surebrooks Limited). Following numerous meetings with Minkies and the City of London, on the 24 October 2016 Minkies wrote to the City of London to confirm that they are withdrawing their bid to run the Café facility at Queen's Park.
4. To secure a smooth transition between the outgoing and incoming tenant the City of London has provided extensive support to Minkies since the lease was awarded in March 2016. Whilst there is learning Officers can apply to future tendering exercises it is disappointing it hasn't been possible for Minkies to run the café in Queen's Park as they remain a popular local company.
5. Consequently, the Superintendent is proposing that a new 13 month lease is provided to Toby Brown until 12<sup>th</sup> January 2018. This is to allow sufficient time for an Independent Consultant to undertake a programme of engagement and consultation with users and non-users of the Queen's Park café, to inform an Options Appraisal to guide future decisions on the café lease.
6. The engagement and consultation will involve:
  - An online questionnaire.
  - Paper copies of the questionnaire with Freepost return envelopes will be made available from the café.
  - Engagement events will be held outside the café on a weekends and during the week. These will be run by the Consultant, with the full support and participation of the existing café leaseholder, and are being used to engage proactively with café users. The event will also allow the current tenant the opportunity to provide bite size samples of the menu.

7. The consultation and engagement process will run from mid-November until the end of December and in January 2017, the Superintendent will present a report to the Queen's Park Joint Consultative Group, setting out the learning from the consultation and the options for café lease beyond January 2018. Once the views from the Consultative Committee have been considered, a further report will be presented to the Management Committee for decision.

### **Proposed changes to working arrangements.**

8. The staff at Queen's Park are being consulted on new working arrangements.

### **Operational Management**

9. Green waste continues to be collected from the park via skips. During the Financial Year 2015 / 2016 the collection of green waste from the park cost £3,212.22. Green waste is collected by the City of London's corporate contractor. Recyclable materials are now collected by Brent Council at commercial rates. For the first 2 quarters of 2016 /2017 the collection of recyclables has cost £270.00.
10. In the first quarter of 2016/2017 there were 20 bookings for the bandstand. A further 23 bookings were taken in the second quarter. These bookings have generated an income of £2,795. An increased fee has been introduced for the supply of tables and chairs.
11. In the current financial year the donation post located in the Children's Farm has received donations amounting to £1,181.93. The style of post will be considered and reviewed as per the comment in paragraph 2.
12. The City Surveyor's Department 20 Year Additional Works Programme has enabled a number of pathways to be resurfaced since the Consultative Group visited the park. The Woodland Walk has been resurfaced and is now fully accessible to wheelchair users. Works have also been completed in the staff yard, with repairs carried out to the concrete slabs that receive heavy vehicle movements throughout the year.
13. The installation of new trim trail equipment in the area that was previously used as a petanque rink has been a popular addition. Users who had previously tied tension bands to trees and park furniture now have a bespoke post to use and benches are no longer used for 'step ups' following the installation of a multi-gym.
14. A number of items of redundant equipment have been removed from the park asset list and have been sent for auction. The Open Spaces Department has made a concerted effort to reduce its assets of fleet, plant and machinery, reducing the requirement for on-going maintenance costs.

## Visitors and Community

15. 'Where is the Nomad' held four outdoor film screenings in the park over the summer. Attendance figures and income receipts were not available at the time of completing this report.
16. The change to the music programme last year, to include a full programme of performances by a local brass band, Regent Community Brass, has proved to be a very popular. These performances continue to be free of charge to our visitors. Children's shows continue to be performed by the Play Area. Again, these events are provided at no cost to our visitors.
17. Family Fun sessions were organised in the park by the RSPB. 28 Sessions were delivered with 1,400 children attending the events over the summer. Positive comments received included; *'This is much more fun than going to the playground'*; *'This is so great, I wish we had this in our park'* Mother of two children who lives in Hammersmith.
18. The Queen's Park Area Residents' Association (QPARA) organised the annual Queen's Park Day event on 18 September with support from the City of London. In excess of 14,400 people attended the event this year.
19. Schools have been invited to assist with the planting of over 3,000 bulbs during October and November 2016. These planting sessions will be led by the park gardener.
20. In the first quarter of 2016/2017, seven requests to film in the park were received. Four requests were granted, and three applications were withdrawn. A further four requests were granted for the second quarter. Filming in the first two quarters has generated an income of £4,440.

## Children's Play Area

21. An Independent Consultant has been appointed to carry out user engagement with users and non-users of the sandpit area in the park. At Queen's Park day an engagement stand was situated outside the play area. In excess of 200 people attended the stand and either left comments, or completed the paper questionnaire (170 filled out).
22. Further engagement events have taken place during the half term week, 24 - 28 October 2016.
23. The Independent Consultant will develop a design for the sandpit area following the feedback from the engagement events. This will include engagement with key stakeholders at a working group meeting to support the development of the final design.
24. From the feedback received at the engagement event, the sandpit is considered a safe place for children to play. The vehicles (train, fire truck) are popular pieces

of equipment with the rocking animals being played with less often. There is a strong desire to have improved access to the toilet facilities. Suggestions for the area of grass which is underused included a mud kitchen, picnic and water play area.

25. Feedback from the public engagement on Queen's Park Day can be found at Appendix 1.

## **Ecology and Environment**

26. Oak Processionary Moth continues to develop as a biosecurity issue for Queen's Park. A number of nests were found and treated by a specialist contractor. The Hampstead Heath Tree Team have also had to respond to Massaria, the London Plane fungal disease, which has affected a number of Queen's Park plane trees.
27. Hedge laying adjacent to the pitch and putt course will continue in February 2017. The park will engage with local schools enabling classes to come along to the park and view how hedges are laid. The environmental benefit of this process can be explained through interpretation.

## **Conservation and Heritage**

28. The Green Flag Award scheme celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Queen's Park is one of only a few sites to have achieved a Green Flag every year since the award started in 1996. The park also received a Green Heritage Award.
29. Queen's Park entered the London in Bloom 'large park' category for the second year and was successful in achieving a Gold Standard award.
30. The Queen's Park Conservation Management Plan (CMP) was introduced in June 2014. The CMP provided and in depth understanding of Queen's Park, its historical development and the different types of heritage that can be found in the park today. The CMP has allowed for the identification of key issues and risk which face the park and its values as well as opportunities to enhance the parks heritage.
31. The CMP sets out overriding objectives under the headings: Heritage, Built Environment and Infrastructure, Natural Environment, Community and Recreation and Managing Information about the Heritage. Essential actions have been set out in an Action Table. Appendix 3 sets out the Action Table with updates and comments.

## **Landscape Management**

32. The Queen's Park Team continue to provide a well maintained green space for the enjoyment and recreation of the local community and wider London. Cyclical maintenance of the formal and recreational areas is carried out by the Team throughout the year. An updated Annual Work Programme can be found at

Appendix 2. This programme sets out the day to day maintenance tasks and forthcoming projects for the park.

33. The Queen's Park Management Plan 2009 – 2014 is currently under review and stakeholders will be consulted with as part of this review. A revised document is planned to be reported to the Queen's Park Joint Consultative Group in June 2017. Between January 2017 – March 2017, engagement and consultation will take place with regard to the Improvement Programme Action Plan years 0 – 5 (2017 – 2021).

## **Sports and Recreation**

34. The introduction of an online tennis booking system has been successful. Users who wish to book a court can now do so online. Queen's Park has over 500 contacts on ClubSpark and since the introduction of ClubSpark in late July 2016, in excess of 1,000 court bookings have been made.
35. Try Tag Rugby used a marked out pitch on the main field in the park, holding 16 sessions between April – August. Staff marked the pitch out for the Tag Rugby.
36. The London Borough of Brent has funding available for the installation of outdoor gyms within the Borough. They have extended this funding to include Queen's Park; they are tendering to include the maintenance of equipment. Having considered comments from the QPJCG, Brent Council has been provided with details of natural trim trail equipment, the costs of which will include the supply and installation of any new equipment. An example of the proposed equipment can be found at Appendix 4.
37. The City of London has been approached by a local resident who has suggested a fenced area be created for dogs to be allowed off the lead. The views of this Committee are sought in regard to the suggestion. Currently, the Queen's Park Byelaws do not permit a dog off a lead.

The options to consider are:

- a) Pursue the suggestion further and carry out wider consultation and engagement with users and non-users. The outcome would be reported back to Committee in June 2017.
  - b) Consider the views of the Consultative Group, noting that there is a nearby space where dogs can be exercised off lead.
  - c) Do not carry out any consultation and retain the status quo in regard to managing dogs on a lead in the park.
38. It is recommended that option b) is the considered option. There is a green space available a few hundred metres from Queen's Park; this space provides an area for dogs to run free off the lead.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

39. This report will help fulfil the City of London Corporation's Corporate Plan 2015-19; to provide valued services, such as education, employment, culture and leisure, to London and the nation. The report also meets the Department's Strategic Goals and Objectives; Protect and conserve the ecology, biodiversity and heritage of our sites, Embed financial sustainability across our activities by delivering identified programmes and projects, Enrich the lives of Londoners by providing high quality and engaging educational and volunteering opportunities, Improve the health and wellbeing of community through access to green space and recreation. The report also contributes to the Departmental values of quality, inclusion, environment, promotion and people.

## **Implications**

40. The operational requirements highlighted in the report will be met from the Queen's Park Local Risk Budget.
41. The Refreshment Pavilion tender was carried out in late 2015, early 2016 and the lease was awarded to a local company, Minkies Deli. A well liked and popular local café / deli in the community, the users of the park will be disappointed that Minkies have made a decision not to continue with the lease. Their withdrawal will delay the ability of the park to have in place a refreshment facility which meets with the needs of the local community.
42. Officers will carry out engagement and consultation with users and non-users of the café. The feedback from the engagement process will provide information for an options appraisal; this will then guide future decisions on the lease at the café and determine the next steps for progressing preferred options.

## **Conclusion**

43. The park team has been successful in achieving the Green Flag award for the 20<sup>th</sup> year and is one of only a handful of green spaces to have achieved this. The park was also successful in achieving and a Gold 'London in Bloom' Award and a Green Heritage Award.
44. Officers will continue to focus their attention on the continuation of providing refreshments in the park whilst we undertake a period of consultation and engagement with the local community.
45. This report demonstrates the continued hard work by the Queen's Park staff and the City of London Corporation in maintaining a good quality Open Space.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Queen's Park Sandpit Play Area - Consultation Feedback
- Appendix 2 – Queen's Park Annual Work Programme 2016 /2017
- Appendix 3 – Conservation Management Plan – Action Plan Table – Comments and Update

- Appendix 4 – Proposed Trim Trail Equipment

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